

July 10 2023

To The Mayor and Members of Council representing Wellington North

My name is Chris Vervoort, and I am a sheep and beef producer within Wellington North. It has been brought to my attention that there are some discussions regarding the number of LG dogs and working dogs permitted on acreages over 25 acres.

I have reviewed the staff report and feel that the council has received a dangerously limited amount of information regarding LGDs to make sound decisions.

In our operation we employ LGDs for the protection of livestock and stock dogs for day-to-day stock movements and care. In our operation dogs are ESSENTIAL workers that address many challenges faced by ON producers.

With the evolution of agriculture, regenerative AG, combined with emissions and carbon reduction targets being set by our Federal Government we are currently seeing major shifts in Agriculture. Over the past few years with the sharp increase in fuel prices and lack of skilled labour we have evolved towards an intensive grazing system. In order to manage that system we work with OMAFRAs best management practices, along with the Ontario Sheep and Beefs code of practice as our regulating guidelines. These are the same guidelines used by the Provincial animal welfare services. As our grazing operation has grown, this spring we had stock grazing in 10 different locations at one time, and I would see that evolving. Wellington North has tremendous Carbon capturing opportunities when combined with innovative farming practices. We can grow tremendous grasses and cover crops and we have a lengthy 7- 8 month grazing opportunity.

With the adoption of an intensive grazing system, we have seen an evolution in soil health along with wildlife around our pastures and farms. With that change brings benefits and challenges within the ecosystem. Positive soil biology is a basis of a strong ecosystem which evolves from there, with that we have seen and increase of all wildlife. A LGD is a non-lethal tool which we use to protect our livestock from being terrorized or literally eaten alive. It may sound harsh but that is exactly what happens. A decision to reduce LGDS for producer creates an **animal welfare concern, a farmer mental illness concern as well as impedes on normal farm practices.**

If the council proceeds with reduction of management tools, we will be forced to use lethal methods to protect our flock which in turn affects the delicate balance of the ecosystem, along with conflicts with local residences around hunting. We need the coyotes and foxes to control the rodent and small game population otherwise the towns and houses within the township will be infested.

As for stock dogs, we use Border collies for working stock. I'm sure everyone by now is aware of the number of farmers set to retire in the next 10 years as per the U of G report released this year. With the limited number of available farm workers we have become reliant on stock dogs. Stock dogs show up for work in all weather happy to be there, their natural ability to herd and negotiate livestock is second to none. Along with those abilities they also address safety concerns as it takes humans out of the path of livestock, as well as emissions reduction as a dog can move a flock of sheep far quicker and with less stress than trucks.

With both LDG and stock dogs there are 3 phases of life, training, working and retirement. For LGD and stock dogs we generally see 2-3 years of training until they are totally reliably, 8-10 working years if lucky followed by retirement. With that in mind even the current by-laws are already impeding my ability to grow my livestock operation and using normal farm practices. With the field and land sizes in Wellington North, the concept of grazing large groups of stock does not fit. We are forced to spread stock to different acreages to follow best management practices simply due to field sizes. Speaking to the notes provided in the Staff report, we are not Australia, we are Wellington north, and need to be able to address our evolving predation challenges the same as a row crop producer can using a sprayer. The report estimated \$2300 first year cost for a LGD which reflects a considerable commitment from a producer.

In summary, I am opposed to the recommendations presented to limit the number of working dogs within the Township of Wellington North for the following reasons and would actually request the amendment to remove the limitations on the number of working dogs.

- It impedes my normal farm practices.
- it impedes my ability to grow a grazing enterprise
- it causes animal welfare concerns
- it causes mental health concern to producer
- it creates a need for unnecessary lethal wildlife control
- it affects the balance in our ecosystem
- it will cause an increase in financial commitment for livestock predation claims
- it reduces my access to a reliable and safe work force.
- it affects my ability to evolve with regenerative agriculture and work towards the Federal government's carbon reduction targets.
- we already have a Code of practice for the care of working dogs, there is no reason to double up with unnecessary by-laws if producers are already following the rules.

While I could continue with this discussion, I appreciate your time is valuable.

I would be happy to speak to my comments and answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your time!

Chris Vervoort

519-993-6413